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FM USEU BRUSSELS

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE

INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE

RUEHKB/AMEMBASSY BAKU PRIORITY

RUEHKV/AMEMBASSY KYIV PRIORITY

RUEHKS/AMEMBASSY MINSK PRIORITY

RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY

RUEHSI/AMEMBASSY TBILISI PRIORITY

RUEHYE/AMEMBASSY YEREVAN PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BRUSSELS 001504

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [BO](#) [EUN](#)

SUBJECT: POLITICAL AND SECURITY COMMITTEE TO ADDRESS EU
SANCTIONS ON BELARUS, NOV. 10-11

REF: STATE 112644

Classified By: POL MINCOUNS CHRISTOPHER DAVIS, Reasons 1.4 (b and d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: In separate meetings on November 5, USEU POLOFF delivered reftel points to EU Council Secretariat Policy Planning officer Pirkka Tapiola, as well as to British and Dutch contacts in Brussels. Reftel points were further widely delivered to Political and Security Committee (PSC) Ambassadors on November 6. The PSC Working Group is considering whether to extend EU sanctions on Belarus (as well as the sanctions' ongoing suspension) beyond their current staggered end dates. (NOTE: The current suspension of EU sanctions ends on December 15, 2009, while the sanctions themselves are scheduled to end on March 15, 2010.) PSC Ambassadors themselves will meet on November 10 or 11 to decide on a recommendation to Ministers meeting at the GAERC on November 16-17. Both EU Council staff as well as UK and Dutch contacts believe that the sanctions and their suspension will be extended, but the issue remains -- how long for each, and when to end them. END SUMMARY

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Belarus Is Not Performing, But EU Favors Engagement
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12. (C) Drawing from reftel, USEU POLOFF demarched Pirkka Tapiola of the EU Council Secretariat Policy Planning Office on November 5. While Tapiola advocates lifting the sanctions altogether, he said that this outcome is "virtually impossible" and a compromise will likely emerge. He believes that sanctions will be extended, perhaps until October 2010, but unlikely beyond that date, and that the sanctions and their suspension will probably be set to end on the same date.

13. (C) UK and Dutch contacts told POLOFF that they remain the holdouts in PSC Working Group meetings for the EU remaining tough on Belarus. Both argue that the sanctions and their suspension should be extended, possibly to October 2010, and each should have a different end date. This would ensure maximum flexibility in the EU decision process, and that ministers again discuss Belarus in 2010 before EU sanctions can be lifted entirely. The UK and the Netherlands make the point that positive action by Belarus should reap a positive reward, but not beforehand.

14. (C) Even though the majority of PSC Working Group representatives reportedly admit that Belarus has not done anything significant to advance promised reforms, they also advocate that the EU "engage more cooperatively" with Belarus. The Dutch contact said it was odd to see all PSC Working Group reps make the same points but come to different conclusions. They noted that a number of major countries

(including Germany and France) disagree with the UK and Dutch proposal to have staggered end dates, saying that the suspension should be extended and made concurrent with the end date of the sanctions themselves. While they may accept sanctions being extended (Reftel). They encouraged continued U.S. engagement in capitals, particularly in Germany, France, Denmark, Italy, Spain, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, and Bulgaria. They also stressed the need for U.S. and EU solidarity on sanctions policies on Belarus for there to be genuine change by the GOB. Reftel points were delivered November 6 to the PSC ambassadors of most of these, and to some other, EU countries.

Possible Next Steps by the EU

16. (C) In addition to the sanctions issue, the PSC Working Group also discussed possible next steps with Belarus, such as relaunching the Partnership Cooperation Agreement (PCA),

BRUSSELS 00001504 002 OF 002

suspended since 1997 and not yet ratified by EU Parliament and EU member states. The Working Group discussion reflected the majority opinion that, given that Belarus has not made significant efforts to fulfill its reform promises, EU sanctions over the past ten years have been ineffective; therefore, the EU should "try a different approach," we were told. Citing the Eastern Partnership Initiative, which includes Belarus, the majority advocate that the EU engage Belarus on practical levels, with an eye towards greater free trade with the EU and possible visa and travel facilitation for the ordinary public. We also hear that a number of member states also believe that a double standard in sanctions is being imposed: yes on Belarus, but not, say, on Armenia and Azerbaijan.

17. (C) The UK and Netherlands objected to defreezing the PCA, again for lack of reforms in Belarus. Our interlocutors said a possible alternative would have the European Commission explore negotiating an "as-yet-undefined informal agreement" with Belarus, such as a joint action plan to advance reforms. This discussion is expected to continue at the Working Group level next week prior to PSC Ambassadors meeting on either November 10 or 11.

MURRAY

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